



House File 2465
Iowa Youth Suicide Prevention Program: *Your Life Iowa*
Report to the Governor and Iowa General Assembly
January 15, 2013

LEGISLATIVE DIRECTIVE – 2012 HOUSE FILE 2465

Division II, Sec.8. Department of Public Health – Iowa Youth Suicide Prevention Program. There is appropriated from the general fund of the state to the department of public health for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2012, and ending June 30, 2013, the following amount ... to be used for the purposed designated: To contract for a program to develop an Iowa youth suicide prevention program: \$ 50,000. 1. The department shall establish a request for proposals process which shall be based upon specifications established under a suicide prevention plan for youth who are targets of bullying, which was developed in partnership with the department during the 2011-2012 fiscal year and shall include but is not limited to an antibullying internet site, internet-based communications including texting capabilities and a telephone hotline. 2. The department shall submit to the general assembly a progress report on or before January 15, 2013, providing a detailed analysis of the program, its budgetary requirements, and the department’s findings and recommendations for continuation of the program.

BACKGROUND

Bullying is defined as unwanted, aggressive behavior among school-aged children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behavior is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time. Bullying can result in physical injury, social and emotional distress, and even death. Victimized youth are at increased risk for mental health problems such as depression and anxiety, psychosomatic complaints such as headaches, and poor school adjustment. Youth who bully are at increased risk for substance use, academic problems, and violence later in life. Youth who both bully and are victims of bullying suffer the most serious consequences and are at greater risk for both mental health and behavior problems. Bullying can occur in person or through technology. “Cyber-bullying” occurs through e-mail, chat rooms, instant messaging, websites, text messaging, or videos or pictures posted on websites or sent through cell phones.

According to the Iowa Department of Public Health 2010 Iowa Youth Survey, 39% of 6th graders and 31% of 11th graders reported being bullied at school in the previous 30 days. Nine percent of 6th, 8th and 11th graders reported being cyber-bullied.

On November 27, 2012, Governor Terry Branstad and Lt. Governor Kim Reynolds hosted the Governor’s Bullying Prevention Summit to raise awareness about bullying and engage stakeholders statewide in a meaningful dialogue about steps needed to address this issue.

Research has shown that being a victim, perpetrator, or witness to bullying is associated with increased risk for suicidal ideation. Suicide is the third leading cause of death among those aged 14 through 24 (CDC, 2010). According to the Iowa Plan for Suicide Prevention: 2011 to 2014, 2,656 Iowa youth were hospitalized for attempted suicide between 2002 and 2007. And, according to the 2010 Iowa Youth Survey, 4% of male and 7% of female 11th graders reported attempting suicide. Eleven percent of 6th graders and 18% of 8th graders reported they had seriously thought about killing themselves.

A. Analysis of Program

IDPH released a competitive request for proposals (RFP) on July 4, 2012 to select the most qualified applicant to provide anti-bullying and youth suicide prevention services pursuant to HF 2465. The RFP specified requirements for the following key program components:

- A toll-free **telephone hotline**, available statewide, 24 hours per day and 7 days per week, to provide information, brief counseling and access to local services and resources.
- A **texting/SMS system** for two-way communication between youth and the program, with the capacity to both receive and send texts.
- An **Internet site** to provide information and resources about bullying and youth suicide prevention, with links to related resources and websites.
- **Promotional strategies** to inform, educate, and engage youth, parents, and educators with program services and resources.

Additionally, applicants were required to:

- assure linkage with the Iowa [Department of Education Bullying Prevention Program](#)
- comply with guidelines set forth in the [IA 2007 Anti-Bullying Law](#)
- base program initiatives on the Iowa Plan for Suicide Prevention: 2011 to 2014
- be certified as a Crisis Center by the [American Association of Suicidology](#) (AAS)

Two applications were received by the August 6, 2012 due date. The application submitted by Boys Town, headquartered in Omaha, Nebraska, received the higher average score and a contract between IDPH and Boys Town was executed on September 24, 2012.

Governor Branstad launched the youth suicide prevention program, entitled “Your Life Iowa”, during his opening remarks at the Governor’s Bullying Prevention Summit on November 27, 2012.



Your Life Iowa has been implemented as follows:

- **Telephone hotline** – available 24/7 at **855-581-8111**
- **Texting** – available 4:00-8:00pm daily by texting “**talk**” to **85511**
- **Website** – available 24/7 at www.yourlifeiowa.org
- **Promotion** activities to-date
 - November 1: Prevention Conference
 - November 4-6: Iowa School Counselor Conference
 - November 27: Governor’s Bullying Prevention Summit
 - December 2: *Your Life Iowa Provides Needed Resource*, Times Republican newspaper
 - Weeks of December 3 and December 10: radio messaging, averaging 190 spots per week for a total of 380 spots
 - December 17: on-line messaging initiated, with 500,000 impressions anticipated by January 20, 2013
 - December 2012, January 2013: IDPH Division of Behavioral Health *Matter of Substance* monthly newsletters
 - January 2013: Department of Education *Each and Every Child* newsletter
 - Program materials mailed to 78 middle and high schools in Cedar Rapids, Davenport, Des Moines, Dubuque, and Sioux City, and to other schools as requested (An example of program materials is included in **Appendix A.**)
 - Six radio interviews
 - KDSM Fox 17, a central Iowa broadcast television station, is promoting Your Life Iowa as a community awareness program and public service through its business partners
 - Partnerships mobilized with the Iowa Department of Education and with the Department of Human Rights State of Iowa Youth Advisory Council (SIYAC). Examples of work done by SIYAC, in their own words:
 - “I first contacted our school principal ... to introduce him to Your Life Iowa, and discuss ... how we can move forward with using it effectively at our school. Besides ... distributing posters, I was put in contact with ... a grant manager for Iowa Safe and Supportive Schools at Central High School. She was very interested ... and had already put a link on the school website, but I also encouraged her to include the number itself ... In addition, we are planning for the upcoming "homeroom" ... on January 17th. Our goal is ... to inform every student in the school about Your Life Iowa and bullying and suicide awareness.”

- “The International News Network, a local station that broadcasts to other local stations nationwide (literally from Nevada to Georgia), came to our school to speak with students and teachers. [School staff] suggested I be interviewed. So I gladly accepted the opportunity. The news story was on cyberbullying, so I discussed my personal experiences and thoughts along with what we were doing in SIYAC and IYC (Iowa Youth Congress) to deal with it (namely the Cyberbullying Bill). At the end of the interview I got a chance to display some of the Your Life Iowa literature and talk a bit about it.”
- “I have taken materials to a couple of public libraries in my area and they both hung up the flyers and put the pamphlets out. Kids of all ages usually go to the library at some point. I have also gone to a few different schools and talked with the guidance counselors. The counselors were very enthusiastic and thought that this is a great program for Iowa”.
- “Currently my school has hung up signs and fliers for Your Life Iowa, and my principal is working on a few things that could potentially mean I could spread this further”.

Beginning in January 2013, Boys Town is required to submit a monthly Your Life Iowa report to IDPH that tracks utilization of program services, including the number of telephone calls and texts and website traffic. The report will identify the location of the caller or texter by county and that person’s relationship to the person being bullied, as well as related information such as age, grade in school, gender, attempts to report the bullying, and location and duration of the bullying problem. (A full list of Your Life Iowa reporting categories is included as **Appendix B.**)

B. Budgetary Requirements

House File 2465 directed a \$50,000 General Fund appropriation to IDPH to establish and operate a youth suicide prevention program from July 2012 through June 2013. IDPH is expending that initial appropriation as follows:

Your Life Iowa FY 2013 Budget – IDPH	
Boys Town	48,200
IDPH Expense	1,000
Proposal Reviewer Services	800
TOTAL	50,000
Your Life Iowa FY 2013 Budget Detail – Boys Town	
Salaries/Benefits	12,783
Website Development/Promotion	18,000
Other Expense	14,700
Indirect Expense (14%)	2,717
TOTAL	48,200

IDPH has requested level funding of \$50,000 in FY2014 to sustain and enhance current Your Life Iowa services through June 2014.

C. Findings and Recommendations

The Your Life Iowa youth anti-bullying and suicide prevention program began operation on November 27, 2012. In its first month, between November 27 and December 31, Boys Town responded to 29 Your Life Iowa phone calls and received 2,391 website contacts. Promotional strategies for the program have been implemented through formal means such as the Governor’s public announcement, radio messaging, newsletters, and general dissemination of materials. Less formal personal efforts have also been initiated, most notably, through the school-specific activities of SIYAC members.

At the current funding level of \$50,000, Your Life Iowa will continue to provide all current program services through June 2014. In addition, IDPH will work with Boys Town and with partners and stakeholders to:

1. Enhance the Your Life Iowa website to include a specific page for parents of elementary and middle school age youth
2. Continue to expand promotion activities to assure statewide coverage
3. Identify evidence-based practices to support bystanders in taking appropriate action to stop bullying they witness, particularly in schools
4. Identify specific ways to collaborate with the Department of Education on related school-based initiatives
5. Align Your Life Iowa with state and local efforts to prevent underage drinking and drug and tobacco use and to promote general teen health and well-being
6. Identify funding sources to sustain program activities (i.e. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration Garrett Lee Smith Grant)
7. Conduct a six-month evaluation of Your Life Iowa, including program utilization and effectiveness

Additional enhancements or revisions to Your Life Iowa may be recommended based on:

1. Findings from the six-month program evaluation
2. Review of similar programs in other states
3. Performance measures associated with other funding sources

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Call 855-581-8111 or text TALK to 85511

Call 24/7. Text from 4 pm to 8 pm every day.

yourlifeiowa.org

Your Life Iowa: *Iowa's bullying and suicide prevention hotline*

A resource for students, parents and educators

Now there's a new "go-to" resource where youth, parents and educational professionals can find the answers they need about bullying.

The Your Life Iowa Hotline offers advice and guidance 24/7 from trained counselors who are just a phone call or text away. Texting available from 4 pm to 8 pm, 7 days per week.

Who does bullying affect?

● **Kids and Teens**

Being bullied may make you feel helpless and isolated. There are positive things you can do to regain control and feel better about yourself. It all starts with talking to someone who can help. Get help from those around you, or contact our Hotline by calling or texting.

● **Parents**

Kids don't always share what is going on in their life. When they do talk, you want to help by finding solutions. Unfortunately, when it comes to bullying and its effects, there are no easy fixes. Give us a call to explore options or for advice on what you can do to support your child.

● **Educators/Schools/Community**

Bullying is a complex problem that is often misunderstood. It is critical to raise school and community awareness, and provide intervention and support for the victims. Call the Hotline for resources and information related to bullying.

Resilient, supported students are stronger students.

Resiliency is the human capacity to bounce back from bad experiences, or thrive in spite of hard times and difficulties. Resilient kids can better deal with problems such as bullying. Research has shown that kids are more resilient if:

- They have supportive people around them
- They think in a positive, optimistic way
- They have good problem-solving skills
- They are involved with their community in a meaningful way
- They have good social skills, like confidence and friendliness
- They have good emotional skills, like knowing how to control their anger
- They have good, realistic self-esteem

Did you know?

In the 2010 Iowa Youth Survey conducted with students in grades 6, 8 and 11, students reported that "in the last 30 days":

- 14% had been physically bullied at school. This included acts of bullying such as hitting, kicking, and pushing.
- 30% had been bullied in a verbal manner such as peers spreading rumors and telling lies about them.
- 15% had been bullied in a way that included sexual jokes, comments and gestures.

Kids who are bullied are at risk for suicide, although bullying alone is not usually the cause. Many issues can contribute to suicide risk, including depression, problems at home and school, and trauma history.

Statistics from the 2008–2009 School Crime Supplement show that an adult was notified in only about a third of bullying cases.

Funded by the Iowa Department of Public Health

Service provided
by Boys Town



*For program info, text **HELP** to 85511. To opt out, text **STOP** to 85511. Standard message and data rates may apply. For Boys Town Privacy Policy, go to boystown.org/resources/website-policy.

Additional support provided by the State of Iowa
Youth Advisory Council



Field	How Recorded
Call ID	Number
Counselor ID	Text
Date and Time	Number
Phone Number	Number
City of Caller/Texter	Text
County of Caller/Texter	Check box
State of Caller/Texter	Text
Zip Code of Caller/Texter	Number
Caller/Texter Name	Text box
Age of Caller/Texter	Number
Gender of Caller/Texter	M/F
Is Call or Text?	Check box
Notes summary	Text box
Main Problem	Menu
How heard of Your Life Iowa	Menu
Safety Issue for Caller/Texter?	Yes/No
Caller/Texter contracted for safety?	Yes/No
Caller in emergency?	Yes/No
Concern for Caller/Texter emotional/mental state	Yes/No
Caller Angry Beg/End	Scale 1 neg - 5 pos
Caller Helpless Beg/End	Scale 1 neg - 5 pos
Caller Confused Beg/End	Scale 1 neg - 5 pos
Caller Relationship to Person Bullied	Drop Down Menu
Type of Bullying: Physical, Verbal, Social/Emotional, Sexual, Cyber	Check Box
Age of Bullying Victim	Number
Grade of Bullying Victim	Number
School attends	Text box
Was bullying reported?	Yes/No
Reported to whom?	Text box
Outcome of report	Text box
Length of bullying (Duration)	Text box
Reasons for bullying	Text box
How often does bullying occur? (Frequency)	Drop Down Menu
Where does bullying occur: school, bus, home, extra-curricular activity, community, cyber-bullying, other	Check Boxes
Safety plan: walk away/ignore, avoid place/people/situation, keep a written record, ask the person to stop, get an adult involved, protect yourself, coping skills	Check Box/can select multiple
Can follow up call be made in a couple of days?	Yes/No
When would caller like follow up call?	Text box
What phone number to call back at?	Number
Special instructions	Text box
Outcomes: Encouraged to speak with school staff, Encouraged to speak with parent/family member, referred to website, police/legal intervention, provided referral, scheduled follow up call, information sent, lethality risk assessment, third party contact - school, third party contact - family, report filed	Check Box/can select multiple
Were Referrals Provided?	Yes/No